

# Know Your Number

*ARE YOU GETTING  
ADEQUATE HEMODIALYSIS?*



*A guide for people  
with kidney failure*

**Dialysis** keeps people with kidney failure healthy longer. If you get the right type and amount of dialysis, you probably will

- feel better and less tired.
- have a better appetite and less nausea.
- have fewer hospital stays and live longer.

Know how to check the adequacy of your hemodialysis, and what to do if it's not adequate. Medicare provides the information you need in this brochure.

**Use it to take charge of your health.**

### **What is adequate dialysis?**

Dialysis takes waste products and extra fluid out of your blood. If you don't get enough dialysis treatment, wastes and fluid build up in your blood. These wastes can make you feel sick and tired, have a poor appetite, bleed more easily, or have other medical problems. Adequate dialysis will help you get rid of these problems, and help you feel better and live longer.

### **How do I find out if my dialysis is adequate?**

The dialysis staff may draw blood before and after your treatment to send to the lab. Then, your lab test results will show how well your dialysis treatment is cleaning your blood. The lab tests show how much of one waste product, called urea, is removed from your blood during dialysis. **There are two measures used to determine adequacy: URR and Kt/V.** Your dialysis center can use either measure. Some use both. Ask your doctor or nurse which measure your dialysis center uses and what your number should be.

### **What do URR and Kt/V mean?**

URR stands for Urea Reduction Ratio.

The URR test measures how much urea was removed from your blood during one dialysis treatment. The **minimum** guideline for adequate dialysis is a URR of 65 percent. Kt/V (pronounced kay tee over vee) is another measure of adequacy. It starts with the URR number and adds other factors such as your weight. The **minimum** guideline for adequate dialysis is a Kt/V of 1.2.

### **My doctor gave me a different number for my URR or Kt/V goal. Why?**

A URR of 65 percent and a Kt/V of 1.2 are the **minimum** numbers for adequate dialysis. Your doctor or dialysis center may set a higher dialysis goal for your health and to make you feel better. This means a URR higher than 65 percent and a Kt/V higher than 1.2 are okay. Talk to your doctor about your number.

### **I feel fine. Why should I check if my dialysis is adequate?**

In the short run, some people may feel okay without adequate dialysis. In the long run, not getting enough dialysis can make you feel weak and tired. It can lead to a higher risk of infection and prolonged bleeding. It can shorten your life.

### **What steps can I take to have adequate dialysis?**

- **ALWAYS** go to all of your scheduled treatments and arrive on time.
- Stay for the **FULL** treatment time.
- Follow your diet and fluid restrictions.
- Follow the advice of your dialysis staff on taking care of yourself.
- Check your URR or Kt/V adequacy number every month.
- Talk to your doctor about which hemodialysis vascular access\* is best for you.
- Learn how to take care of your access.

\* Your vascular access is the entrance your doctor makes into your blood vessels. During dialysis, your blood is removed and returned through your vascular access.



### ***What do fluid restrictions have to do with adequate dialysis?***

Sticking to your fluid restrictions can help you feel better during dialysis. If you drink too much fluid, you may become short of breath, have swelling of the legs, and have high blood pressure when you come in for dialysis. The more fluid you have in your body, the harder your body has to work during dialysis. When large amounts of fluid need to be removed by dialysis, you may feel

- **light-headed or faint,**
- **weak,**
- **muscle cramps,**
- **sick to your stomach.**

**DON'T** end your treatment early because of these symptoms. Discuss how to reduce these problems with your doctor and dietician.

### ***What if my URR or Kt/V are still below the goal?***

Some medical problems can prevent you from meeting your adequacy goal. Talk to your doctor, nurse, and dietician – you are a team, and you can work together to improve your care.

### ***How can I keep track of my URR or Kt/V?***

There are charts inside this brochure you can detach and keep with you. Mark your URR or Kt/V number each month. If your number falls below the green line, talk to your doctor or other member of your health team.

**For more information on adequate dialysis, ask your doctor and other health team members at your dialysis center or contact the ESRD Network in your area.**

**For more information about kidney disease and treatment, contact**

**American Association of Kidney Patients  
1-800-749-2257  
[www.aakp.org](http://www.aakp.org)**

**National Kidney Foundation  
1-800-622-9010  
[www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org)**

**American Kidney Fund  
1-800-638-8299  
[www.akfinc.org](http://www.akfinc.org)**

**Your ESRD Network  
The phone number and address must be posted at your dialysis center or you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).  
TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.**

